



PURPOSE AND NEED

The Headwaters Resource Management Plan (RMP) **has been** prepared for one fundamental purpose: to provide a comprehensive framework for managing and allocating public land and resources in the Headwaters Resource Area during the next ten or more years.

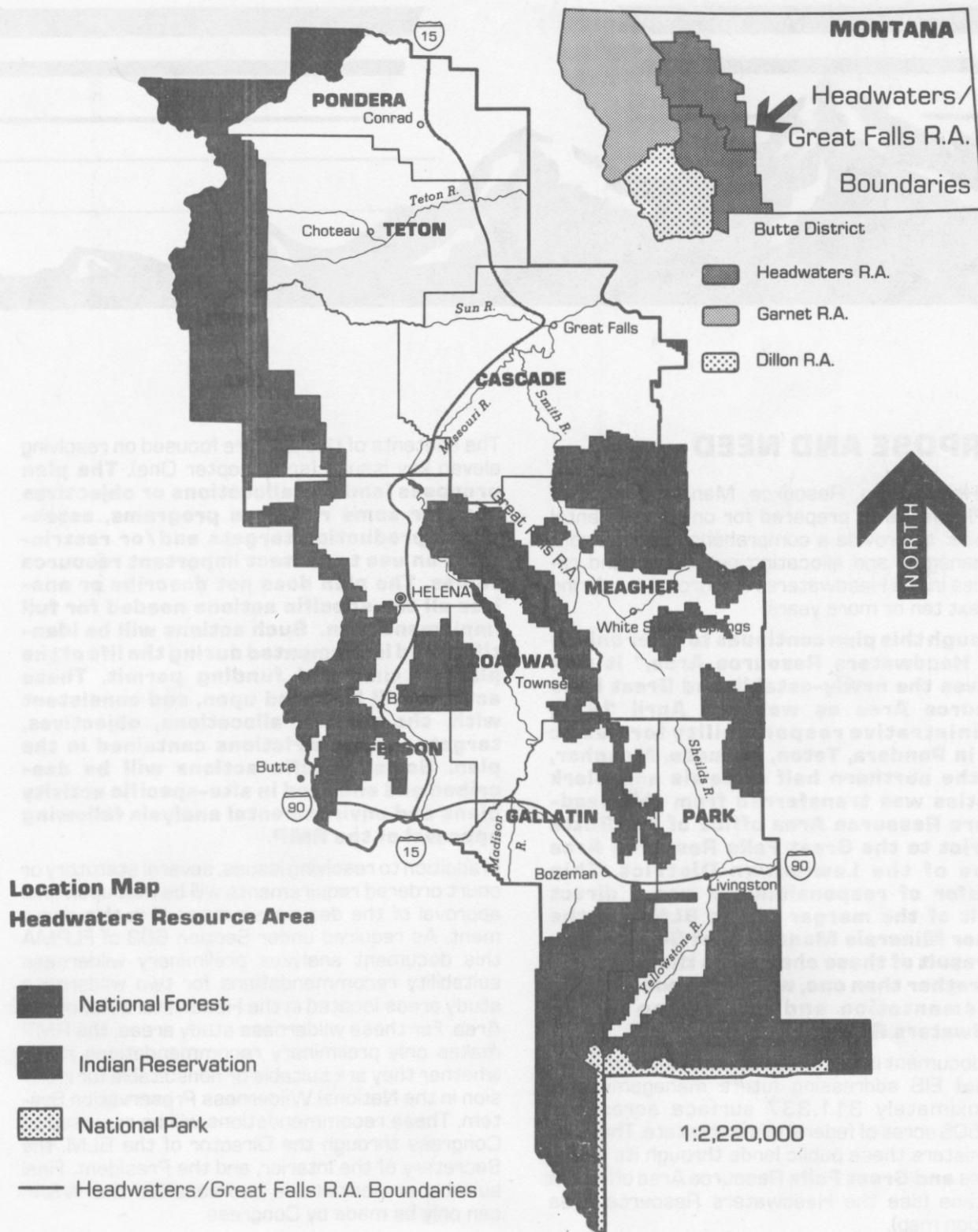
Although this plan continues to refer only to "the Headwaters Resource Area," it now involves the newly-established Great Falls Resource Area as well. In April 1983, administrative responsibility for public land in Pondera, Teton, Cascade, Meagher, and the northern half of Lewis and Clark counties was transferred from the Headwaters Resource Area office of the Butte District to the Great Falls Resource Area office of the Lewistown District. This transfer of responsibilities was a direct result of the merger of the BLM and the former Minerals Management Service. The net result of these changes is that two offices, rather than one, will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the Headwaters RMP.

This document includes both a proposed RMP and a **final** EIS addressing future management of approximately 311,337 surface acres and 655,505 acres of federal mineral estate. The BLM administers these public lands through its Headwaters **and Great Falls** Resource Area offices in Montana (see the Headwaters Resource Area Location map).

The contents of this plan are focused on resolving eleven key issues (see Chapter One). **The plan proposes land use allocations or objectives and, for some resource programs, establishes production targets and/or restrictions on use to protect important resource values. The plan does not describe or analyze all the specific actions needed for full implementation. Such actions will be identified and implemented during the life of the plan as time and funding permit. These actions will be based upon, and consistent with, the various allocations, objectives, targets, and restrictions contained in the plan. Some specific actions will be described and analyzed in site-specific activity plans and environmental analysis following approval of the RMP.**

In addition to resolving issues, several statutory or court ordered requirements will be met upon final approval of the decisions proposed in this document. As required under Section 603 of FLPMA this document analyzes preliminary wilderness suitability recommendations for two wilderness study areas located in the Headwaters Resource Area. For these wilderness study areas, the RMP makes only preliminary recommendations as to whether they are suitable or unsuitable for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. These recommendations will be reported to Congress through the Director of the BLM, the Secretary of the Interior, and the President. Final suitable or unsuitable decisions for the WSAs can only be made by Congress.

INTRODUCTION



The document also analyzes alternatives for livestock grazing on public land as required under a court ordered agreement based on a 1973 lawsuit filed against the BLM by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

In addition, this planning action serves to consolidate and update land use planning guidance currently contained in eleven separate Management Framework Plans that were prepared prior to the establishment of the Headwaters Resource Area in 1976. In some cases the existing management framework plans consist of partially completed documents that were never formally adopted by the BLM. Thus, for some portions of the Headwaters Resource Area, this RMP will provide the first comprehensive management guidance to be approved by the BLM.

PLANNING PROCESS OVERVIEW

The BLM resource management planning process consists of nine basic steps (we are now at Step 8) and requires the use of an interdisciplinary team for the completion of each step. The planning steps described in the regulations and used in preparing this plan are described below and are graphically summarized in Figure I-1.

Step 1. Identification of Issues

This step is intended to identify resource management problems or conflicts that can be resolved through the planning process.

Step 2. Development of Planning Criteria

During this step preliminary decisions are made regarding the kinds of information needed to clarify the issues, the kinds of alternatives to be developed, and the factors to be considered in evaluating alternatives and selecting a preferred resource management plan.

Step 3. Inventory Data and Information Collection

This step involves the collection of various kinds of issue-related resource, environmental, social, economic, or institutional data needed for completion of the process.

Step 4. Analysis of the Management Situation

This step calls for a deliberate assessment of the current situation. It includes a description of current BLM management guidance, a discussion of existing problems and opportunities for solving them, and a consolidation of existing data that is needed to analyze and resolve the identified issues.

Step 5. Formulation of Alternatives

During this step several complete, reasonable resource management alternatives are prepared; including one for no action and several that strive to resolve the issues while placing emphasis either on environmental protection or resource production.

Step 6. Estimation of Effects of Alternatives

The physical, biological, economic, and social effects of implementing each alternative are estimated in order to allow for a comparative evaluation of impacts.

Step 7. Selection of the Preferred Alternative

Based on the information generated during Step 6, the District Manager identifies a preferred alternative. The draft RMP/EIS document is then prepared and distributed for public review.

Step 8. Selection of the Resource Management Plan

Based on the results of public review and comment, the District Manager selects a proposed resource management plan and publishes it along with a final EIS. A final decision is made after a thirty-day protest period on the final EIS.

Step 9. Monitoring and Evaluation

This step involves the collection and analysis of long-term resource condition and trend data to determine the effectiveness of the plan in resolving the identified issues and to assure that implementation of the plan is achieving the desired results. Monitoring continues from the time the RMP is adopted until changing conditions require a revision of the whole plan or any portion of it.

FIGURE I-1

